



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Press Service



Release Immediate

June 19, 1923.

SILVER FOX RANCHING
A PROFITABLE INDUSTRY

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The production of silver foxes, properly managed, has proved a profitable business. As a fur animal bred in captivity the silver fox has no rival. Both pelts and the live foxes for breeding stock are in demand. To meet a general lack of authentic information regarding the real status of this industry, and the best management of silver foxes on ranches, United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 1151, Silver Fox Farming, by Frank G. Ashbrook, biologist, has been issued.

Approximately 90 per cent of the silver fox pelts sold on the fur market are from ranch-bred foxes. During February, 1922, 2,375 silver fox pelts from ranches all over the United States and Canada were sold in London. A pelt from a United States ranch-raised fox brought the top price, \$631.68. Silver foxes are being grown successfully in practically every one of the northern tier of States, and in the cooler parts of California, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. About 500 ranchers are engaged in the business in this country; in 1922 there were between 12,000 and 15,000 foxes in captivity, representing an investment of about \$8,000,000.

Quality, not quantity, is the factor that counts in breeding silver foxes. The location and plan of the ranch are extremely important considera-

tions, as well as selection of stock and feeding and breeding. Foxes do not do well under shiftless management. The successful rancher is the one who has the well-being of each individual fox continually in mind. He must study the behavior of his foxes at every opportunity and keep constantly informed in regard to the best practices in their management.

Foxes should be kept as quiet as possible, especially during the breeding and whelping seasons. They are easily alarmed and disturbed by strangers, so that ranches are often located in remote places where the animals are reasonably secure from intruders of all kinds. The bulletin has diagrams and pictures showing different ways to lay out a fox farm, and how to construct various types of pens, dens, fences, and other equipment. A watch-tower or outlook from which the entire ranch can be observed without disturbing the foxes is illustrated as an essential feature.

The importance of Mendel's law in relation to breeding is discussed, and the characteristics of a first-rate animal are pointed out. The ration provided must be wholesome and acceptable as well as cheap. Directions for preparing special feeds are given. Great emphasis is laid on cleanliness and regularity of feeding. Tables show the amount and kind of food that is best for foxes of different ages. Details of the management of the foxes under all ordinary conditions are intended to aid both the beginner and the experienced rancher, and the section on sanitation, particularly the prevention of diseases and parasites, should receive especial attention.

This bulletin may be obtained free on application to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.